



## Minutes of the Chambers Council Meeting

Held on Wednesday 24 June 2020

Via Zoom

<b>Present</b>			<b>Apologies</b>		
	Laura Cohen	LC		Paul Rowland	PR
	Suzanne Davy	SD		Daniel Waterman	DWa
	Phil Osman	PO		Nicholas Gallagher-Hughes	NGH
Chair	Matt Hubbard	MH		Nigel Eggleton	NE
	Charlie Houston-Brown	CHB		Mark Brammar	MB
	Peter Graham	PG		Nick Phillips	NP
	Margaret Michell	MM		Paul Farmer	PFa
	Hannah Ault	HA		Carl Croft	CC
	Jeremy Lefroy	JL		Jonathan Andrew	JA
	Scott Elliot	SE		Matthew Parker	MP
	Mike Herbert	MH		Geoff Riley	GR
	Jackie Walker	JW		Ann Pittard	AP
	Karen Staley	KS		Keith Mitchell	KM
	Paul Franklin	PF		Kate Beardmore	KB
	Steve English	SE		John Berrisford	JB
	Susan Rose	SR		Tim West	TW
	Dean Moorhouse	DM		Carl Copestake	CCo
	Chris Knott	CK		Ramona Hirschi	RH
	Mike Frewer	MF		Julie Mirowski	JM
	Lisa Cooper	LC		Natalie Hewitt	NH
	Steve Timmis	ST		Jonathan Mitchell	JM
	Sarah Da Silva	SDS			
	Jed Eatough	JE			
	Gary Smith	GS			
	Fiona Hawkins	FH			
	Francois Levert	FL			
	David Woolrich	DWa			
	Lorraine Green	LG			

<b>NO.</b>	<b>ACTION POINTS/DECISIONS</b>	<b>By whom?</b>	<b>By when?</b>
	<b>WELCOME &amp; APOLOGIES</b>		
7.01	MH welcomed attendees and MT	All	Closed
	<b>PRESENTATION BY MARTIN TRAYNOR, SMALL BUSINESS CROWN REPRESENTATIVE</b>		
7.02	Martin Traynor gave a talk on the role of the Small Business Crown Representative and public sector procurement.	All	Closed

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	<p>Doing business with Government has been seen as difficult and working with business community to help and encourage businesses to work with government.</p> <p>£60b per year spent on goods and services and the Government has an aspiration that for every £3 spent, £1 of that should be with an SME. A huge aspiration but departments are geared up to do this.</p> <p>Involved in improving communication and raising profile for some of the initiatives. Contracts Finder was set up some years ago which is a portal where all Government contracts over £10,000 have to be advertised, and public sector (local authorities, police, NHS) have to be advertised over £25,000 by statute. Free service but has not been well enough advertised. SMEs can register to see what contracts are coming out from Government. Meet the Buyer events taking place but tending to find the same people at these events. Working with the BCC to develop a Meet the Buyer template where Chambers can contact a series of businesses pertinent to the contract which is being offered. Looking at virtual Meet the Buyer in the short to medium term. Piloting for 6 months in the East Midlands a public sector bid writing service to help SMEs prepare a good, well written and focused bid. Will be rolled out with the Growth Hubs around the country. Developing a "tell us once" service to ensure that SMEs are not completing the same information to various Government departments. 60 day payment on undisputed invoices has been implemented. Each Government department now has an SME representative.</p> <p>LC - How do we all get access to the new streamlined service for businesses getting contracts and getting buyers online? How to keep things joined up on policy side working with BCC and FSB who have the same remit. MT responded that they are having to work with many sectors to try and get a central database of companies. Feeling that the landscape of how we do business will change coming out of COVID19. Hoping that the Growth Hub's able to do more to help on this. Trade associations can be varied in size and type and Government has historically not been good at engaging with Trade Associations but MT is trying to work more with them. BEIS would be a great start for this.</p> <p>SD – Bid writing service, will there be a cost? MT advised that at this stage no, but not a bid writing service in the strictest sense. Minimum level of turnover stipulations can preclude SMEs from bidding for Government contracts, will this be looked at? MT advised that the whole procurement procedure is being looked at. Coming out of COVID19 there will be a lot of businesses who don't have the funding to continue or go out of business who may be important parts of the supply chain. But under current rulings the new companies will not be in a position to bid. SD asked if local SMEs can be working with the local public sector opportunities. MD advised that it is in the interests of Local Authorities to source locally.</p>		

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	<p>PO – Insurance has long been an issue and would welcome the changes in this. Tendency towards wanting to have a training requirement shown within the tender which are irrelevant for smaller companies. Getting phoenix companies back into contention after COVID19, one of the problems is that a lot of the tenders have a stipulation that none of the directors must have worked for a company that has an NI debt or has been involved with a company that has gone bust with NI debt, will have a situation where honestly disclosing this will be difficult. MT advised that Government is acutely aware of the last point and a statute has recently gone through Parliament and is looking at the phoenix approach. On training and policies stipulation, the bid writing service will be able to help companies with this as they check through the bid. MT asked PO for case studies. SW advised that there is a greater sense of proportionality now compared to previous years.</p> <p>MM – Chair of Social Value and Procurement Forum. Very interested in the “Tell us Once” Scheme which sounds sensible. Is there a model in that which could be more tailored for local groups and local authorities? MT replied that this is being looked at in Government and would like to get there but could take some time to achieve.</p> <p>SW – Have an integrated approach with Growth Hub and LEP and some of our staff deliver the Growth Hub services and work closely with both. SW would like to work closer with MT on procurement from a local point of view.</p>		
	<b>MINUTES</b>		
7.03	Minutes of previous meeting held on 29 January were approved. PO approved, seconded by MF.	All	Closed
	<b>MATTERS ARISING</b>		
7.04	None	All	Closed
	<b>UPDATE FROM STAFFORD LOCAL AREA ADVISORY BOARD</b>		
7.05	No representative present from	All	Closed
	<b>UPDATE FROM STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS LOCAL AREA ADVISORY BOARD</b>		
7.06	No update	All	Closed
	<b>UPDATE BY FORUM CHAIRS</b>		
7.07	<p><b>Social Value, CSR &amp; Procurement – MM</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Last Forum meeting was held on 15 May via Zoom with 10 attendees. Pleased to welcome SW and Jeremy Lefroy and Jo Kemp from the LEP.</li> <li>Main points were on effect of lockdown on businesses and how we have responded to challenges and how social value can be increased.</li> <li>Tim Edwards gave an update of progress on the Social Value Charter and is currently speaking to partners and stakeholders including Social Value UK. Charter designed as a roadmap to aid members in incorporating, increasing and</li> </ul>	All	Closed

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	<p>measuring social value activity. Introducing an accreditation scheme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online platform being developed by the Chamber which will enable cooperation between businesses. Many businesses have been collaborative and helpful during lockdown.</li> <li>• Continuing with various projects including Boosting Women in Business and the refugee project.</li> <li>• SW and MM had a meeting about Keele Deal Inclusion, could be a lot of opportunity of working together on that scheme.</li> <li>• SC and MM attended the UN Global Conference in March (pre-lockdown) at Goodwins. In the process of setting up a lot of meetings and once lockdown is lifted, these will be followed up.</li> <li>• MM tried to join a UN Global Compact summit but due to technical issues could not take part.</li> </ul> <p><b>Money Matters – PG</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forum meeting held on Zoom and felt that there was more involvement and interaction.</li> <li>• Ryan Cartwright from British Business Bank spoke about CBILs. D</li> <li>• Discussed at length the Job Retention Scheme with positive comments around this.</li> <li>• Discussed tax relief and support around this and comments were all positive about the Government’s approach.</li> <li>• Additional forum on 17 July to discuss an updates on Government schemes.</li> </ul> <p><b>Manufacturers Forum – DW</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Last meeting on 15 April with great attendance who appreciated the Zoom meeting.</li> <li>• Michelin held a webinar around how to open up factories safely.</li> </ul> <p><b>Digital Forum – CHB</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forum meeting held on 24 April via Zoom. Had already been trying to persuade members to join remotely and COVID19 has forced this to happen. Chambers worked well to get this working efficiently. 10 attendees.</li> <li>• Focus was on COVID19 related issues and where digital enablement should go.</li> <li>• Working on getting MS Teams operational for ease of collaboration.</li> <li>• Had a review of the new platform to help Chambers members to connect more easily.</li> <li>• Next meeting is on 10 July via Zoom.</li> </ul> <p><b>Environment, Energy &amp; Sustainability – SE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Had meeting 22 May via Zoom attended by 20 people. Great cross-section with attendees from the Council, Keele University and SBEN, Engie.</li> </ul>		

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussed District Heat Network, hydrogen at Keele University which are ground breaking. Need a joined-up approach on how businesses can transfer skills.</li> <li>• Discussed circular supply chain in Staffordshire feeding into these schemes. Green economy coming out of lockdown is going to be a large part of the future.</li> <li>• De-carbonisation is crucial to the net carbon zero target by 2030.</li> <li>• Looking at how government opportunities can be used in the area.</li> <li>• Next meeting on 17 July.</li> </ul> <p><b>LEP Update – HA/SW</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LEP very busy at the moment in terms of sub-groups. COVID task force being put into place. Developing 64 projects which will be going to the Government in terms of funding.</li> <li>• Local Industrial Strategy is trying to be implement but this may change slightly due to COVID19.</li> <li>• Growth Hub been very busy and have seen more engagement from SMEs</li> <li>• Trying to reposition the LEP. New marketing strategy and looking to build that further, supported by the Chambers.</li> <li>• YouTube videos being published with Alun Rogers to promote what the LEP is about.</li> <li>• PO asked about the borders of the LEP and review at Government. SW advised that there is no update but is an ongoing discussion at Government level. Alun Rogers as CEO is working to integrate north and south.</li> <li>• Board strengthening it’s role and the LEP is acting more as a facilitator.</li> <li>• Requested a speedy response for “shovel ready” projects across the county.</li> <li>• Mark Parkinson from the County Council is the new Chief Executive of the LEP and will be attending future meetings.</li> </ul> <p><b>Staffordshire Enterprise – JL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board met earlier in the year just before lockdown and then a further meeting in May.</li> <li>• Agreed that online format gets greater attendance as no-one needs to travel.</li> <li>• Have been looking at impact on start-up support for existing and new start-ups. Redundancy task force, impact on graduates and how Chamber can be supportive to them and young people in general.</li> <li>• Equity funding is seen as important and longer term solutions will be necessary. Looked at that and what practical measures can be taken.</li> <li>• Looked at how membership of the Chambers can be adapted to appeal and support as many people as possible.</li> <li>• Mental health support for business was discussed. Chambers taking this very seriously and would like to thank the whole</li> </ul>		

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	<p>Chamber team for the work that has been done over the last few months.</p> <p><b>WM Reserve Forces – MF</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is Armed Forces week and would like to take the opportunity to pay tribute to the work of the military in support of the NHS and the national effort countering the pandemic, which has all been widely publicised. The regional contribution from the West Midlands.</li> <li>• Brigade Headquarters has supported national and local support planning structures</li> <li>• Regular and Reserve soldiers from the Royal Signals and Reservists from the Mercian Regiment have provided Mobile COVID Testing Units. Between them they have provided over 20% of the total of over 90 plus mobile units</li> <li>• Military training for Regular and Reserve Forces has restarted, with some very innovative distancing solutions</li> <li>• All Cadet Force activities remain suspended until September, but communications and training have continued via Zoom with great effect and success. Orders are awaited to restart normal activities - guess that will correlate with schools opening</li> <li>• There will be no big parades or major events for this year for Armed Forces Week, but number of Zoom events were circulated in Staffordshire Chambers excellent weekly webinar programme</li> <li>• This afternoon at 2pm there is a presentation with everything you need to know about the Reserve Service in the West Midlands</li> <li>• Tomorrow at 2.30 the national Army Presentation Team is hosted by our own Deputy Brigade Commander, which should be a good Army update</li> <li>• Both sessions are just an hour long and I commend them both to you</li> <li>• On 21 July, the Chamber is hosting a Zoom Armed Forces Covenant signing with a guest speaker on the theme of mental wellbeing and how positive psychology can help develop personal leadership in these challenging times. Invitations will be circulated shortly.</li> </ul>		
<b>CHIEF EXECUTIVES REPORT</b>			
7.07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Met a lot of key influencers through the British Chambers of Commerce.</li> <li>• Two recent meetings with Midlands Connect, larger local companies and Patrons and how the north midlands manufacturing corridor into developing the road from Wrexham to Nottingham. This project has a 60 year expectation.</li> </ul>	All	Closed

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy Hour has worked well however, disappointing that MPs have let us down at the last minute. Will be continuing with these.</li> <li>• Some furloughed staff are back and are looking at how Commerce House will work.</li> <li>• Recruiting for High Growth Advisor for Growth Hub.</li> <li>• Start-up Advisors will be starting in the next couple of weeks.</li> <li>• Policy Advisor will be recruited shortly to help boost the policy work.</li> <li>• First online recruitment event and on average 4 or 5 members per week have been recruited.</li> <li>• April, May and June renewals are starting to be invoiced which will show which members will be renewing. Hoping that we have done enough to show we are here to support that members will renew. All members have been called during lockdown. Proud of the team.</li> <li>• 5,000 phone calls have been made or received by members and non-members. Pay tribute to Laura Hodgkiss who has worked hard to make the webinars work and be of help to members and non-members alike.</li> <li>• PO – asking for an update on HS2 for Staffordshire. Came up in the Midlands Connect meeting yesterday. Not a lot of change but are working with HS2 on developing Meet the Buyer events. Handsacre link is now fairly secure and is in the statute. Interesting to see what happens in the announcement about spending due in the next couple of weeks. MT advised that the Chancellor is planning a mini budget in July which will be significant investment in the economy. MH advised that there is the first meeting of the HS2 Forum on 2 July. SW advised that the forum had been set up to discuss the economic and environmental effects of HS2.</li> <li>• JL asked if the start-up proposal to the County Council had gone through and SW advised that it had and appointed 2 members of staff to work on that.</li> <li>• JL also asked if the space between refuge spaces on the new M6 smart motorway. SW advised that this would be added to the agenda of the transport forum.</li> <li>• MM asked about the Business Manifesto and when it is likely to be submitted. SW has asked Ruth Smeeth and Gareth Snell to look at the manifesto and pull out lobbying messages more clearly to enable the Chamber to get this done. Due to be delivered tomorrow and will send around to all Forum Chairs.</li> </ul>		
	<b>ROUND TABLE ON EFFECTS OF COVID19</b>		
7.08	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SE pleased with the way staff have dealt with the lockdown but are now starting to see the stress on staff. Not seen a drop-off in efficiency but seen staff working flexibly, but also into the evening and feels this is not sustainable for the long term. Looking how to transition back to the offices.</li> </ul>	All	Closed

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	<p>Continuation of working from home but staff will also come into the office in the future. Workload in logistics and distribution has increased exponentially but building work is very quiet. Seeing already residential planners changing the way they look at planning in terms of space needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JW – have continued to work through, but finding difficulty responding with warehousing and response times. Customers need sanitiser and cleaning immediately. Working from home has not helped the business.</li> <li>• KS – have received queries regarding furlough and amounts for the revenue can be difficult to calculate where staff are not full time contracted. Payroll clerks will need more support. Been a great scheme but companies may find it difficult to manage when it ends.</li> <li>• PF – conversation has now moved more towards people getting ready to make redundancies, need to brace for when furlough scheme ends.</li> <li>• HA – been involved with the BEIS weekly chats which have been useful. Issues in ceramics industry have been around supply chain and pro-forma invoices are creating cash flow problems. Had difficulties getting product due to quarries being closed. Sales have been down by around 60%. Done an online exhibition which is working well, exhibitors happy as sales are starting to increase. MT asked HA to send details about pro-forma invoices to him as they are looking at how they can support cash flow in business. SW advised that SCC could support on this as it has been seen across all sectors. MT interested in finding out more information about this.</li> <li>• MH – staff were working from home. Filming is difficult but just started to do single man filming. Doing a lot of procedure and back to work. Post-production work has been carried out during lockdown. Move back to office working is not as important as it was, a lot of staff are happy to continue working from home.</li> <li>• CHB – lack of integration between telephony and systems has been brought into stark relief and will be a challenge in the future to implement for some companies.</li> <li>• JL – work mostly in productions grown and made overseas. Could be major harvest problems in elsewhere in the world (locust swarms etc) which has meant that cereal prices are increasing. Brexit no deal possibility will have a major effect on fresh produce coming into and going out of the country. Worth SCC keeping a strong eye on this.</li> </ul>		



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	<p>SR - I have kept working from my studio but we have not yet been able to open the workshop properly. We've managed to put a through samples through as we started to test the machinery and check everything ok. I thought Karen's point about going back to work for employees who are furloughed very true. I'm slightly worried as to how to work it all out with keeping our cash flow going and generating new work. I would like to say thank you to the Chamber for their support and initiatives because without that support it would be like jumping off cliff without being able to see the bottom. I am very worried about some of our suppliers. Will we be able to maintain our china supply to fulfil new orders?</p>		
<b>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</b>			
7.09	None	All	Closed
<b>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</b>			
7.10	Wednesday 23 September at 0830hrs – venue TBC	All	Closed